

40 WEEKS EARL BLUMENAUER #9 Bike-partisanship 40 IDEAS

Background

Bicycling and walking are often called ‘alternative transportation’ modes. In fact, they are often our *primary* ways of moving from place to place; all of us learned to walk and many of us learned to ride a bicycle long before we slid into the driver’s seat of a car. Sadly, for more than 60 years, we’ve focused our collective attention – and most of our funding – on the automobile, relegating the less expensive and healthier modes of walking and bicycling to ‘alternative’ status, only as important as the latest fad in fashion or lifestyle.

In addition to defining bike and pedestrian activities as alternative transportation, funding to these programs has been threatened in recent Transportation legislation from House Republicans. While these efforts have been repeatedly beaten back, the threat remains: the most efficient form of urban transportation ever invented is in danger of being marginalized and dismissed at the federal level.

Solution

Congressman Blumenauer, in conjunction with Congressman Petri of Wisconsin, has authored an amendment to restore dedicated funding for biking and walking, streamline the federal programs, and ensure that local governments can access the funding for these popular projects.

Backing up Congressman Blumenauer's work on the Hill and with the Congressional Bike Caucus, a network of dedicated policy thinkers, local officials, and activists across the country are demanding that cycling is given the recognition it deserves. Armed with collections of statistics and success stories, they descended on Capitol Hill last week as part of the 13th Annual Bike Summit. Some of the information they had on hand:

- In 2009, 12% of all trips in the United States were made by bicycling or walking – up 25% from 2001 and bicycle commuting increased by more than 40% nationwide between 2000 and 2008.
- The U.S. bicycle industry supports an estimated 1.1 million jobs, in construction, retail, industry, etc. and generates nearly \$18 billion in federal, state and local taxes.
- Between 16 million and 20 million bicycles are sold in the United States every year – more than all of the cars and light trucks sold in the U.S. combined.
- In southwest Virginia, visitors along the Virginia Creeper Trail spend \$1.59 million annually, providing an estimated 27 new full time jobs.
- In Indianapolis, IN, a study of home values near the Monon Trail concluded that homes closer to the trail sell for an average of 11 percent more.
- On North Carolina's Outer Banks, bicycle tourism generates \$60 million annually in economic activity, an annual return nine times the cost of the region's \$6.7 million investment in bicycle infrastructure.
- The Transportation Enhancements (TE) program, which funds the majority of bicycle and pedestrian projects, is oversubscribed in a majority of states. The most recent call for TE proposals in Oklahoma yielded requests for roughly 3 times the available funds.
- In the last 6 years, over 300 communities have applied for Bicycle-Friendly Community status to improve their transportation, livability and tourism.
- The US Conference of Mayors, League of Cities, and National Association of Counties all support local control of these programs.

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